

11-2000

## South Union Messenger (November 2000)

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# South Union Messenger

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Newsletter for the Friends of the Shaker Museum at South Union, Kentucky  
November 2000

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## *Fall is Here...*

For the third year, the Shaker Museum welcomed hundreds of visitors to Shaker Farm Day, our annual living history event. With a beautiful fall day as the back drop, over thirty interpreters stayed busy on the grounds. Visitors had the opportunity to get involved with numerous activities including wool carding & dyeing, candle dipping, lard rendering, and basket making, to name just a few. We would like to thank the following volunteers, without whose support events of this nature would not be possible:

Janet Millen Robinson  
Lloyd Davies  
Mike Sisk  
Becky Christmas  
Trent Spurlock  
Melanie Smith  
J.R. White

Katherine Maddox  
Libby Davies  
Tom Bolton  
Dale Spencer  
Amy Taylor  
Justin Mitchell

Linda McNevin  
Sophie Davies  
Sally Ann Strickler  
Mary Spencer  
Drew Mauney  
Cameron Carlock

We would also like to thank the skilled craftspeople and organizations that contributed their time, talents, and resources:

Mike Hossum  
Dory Hudspeth  
Scott's Auburn Mills  
Firststar Bank  
Gary Macintosh

Sam Hossum  
Roy's Barbecue  
Don Brooks  
Paula Clark  
Kirby & Poe Meat Processors

Dean Watkins  
Chip Willingham  
Sandra Vick  
Nancy Gaines

Planning for the "*Christmas in the Kitchen*" children's program is in full swing. Although we have yet to advertise the program, many of the time slots have already been filled by teachers representing schools from Clarksville, Tennessee to Louisville, Kentucky. We are excited that our programs are reaching an ever-broadening audience from all over the surrounding region.





## *The Last of the South Union Shakers* by Roger Selvidge

Buried side-by-side in the Auburn Cemetery are two of the last eight Shakers from the South Union Shaker community: Lizzie Simmons Bates and William Bates. A single stone marks the graves of two individuals whose lives in and out of the Shaker community seemed to echo the inevitable end of South Union Shakerism. Their subsequent life as "worldly people" was an ironic twist to the many years spent at South Union.

By the year 1900, the number of Shakers at South Union was dwindling, less attention was given to the Shaker traditions and spiritual rituals, and more influences from the outside world were clearly noticeable. Items like Victrolas were purchased for personal use in the village and necessities such as linens and soap were often store bought. The journals from this period record daily accounts of items of a personal rather than spiritual nature.

Elizabeth or "Lizzie" Simmons, who joined the Shakers when she was 12, became caught up in the influence of the outside world. This is evident in an entry in a 1911 South Union journal which reads, "Lizzie Simmons is having the 12th and 14th rooms cleaned today; both of them to be occupied by her-one to live in, the other for company." By this time the sisters were wallpapering and painting their own rooms with commercial materials.



Brother William Bates on the steps of the 1846 Ministry Shop, ca. 1900



*(...continued from page 2)*

According to the 1883 census, William Bates was 30 years of age and living in the North Family at South Union. In April 1915, the trustees at South Union purchased a new "Lilly Rio" automobile for one thousand dollars. As soon as Brother William learned how to drive, he would take out almost every day, carting the remaining Shakers to baseball games, holiday celebrations, and a variety of activities outside the Shaker village. Shakers had always had a bent for being progressive, but Bates and the automobile seemed to reflect what the Shakers were becoming: more interested in the offerings of the "world" than life within the Shaker village.

By 1917 Bates had been appointed trustee when sister Lucilla Booker was released as trustee due to failing health. South Union by this time was being modernized with a "bathroom and water closet" and external telephone service. Pleasant Hill, Union Village, and Enfield were closed. In 1922 when Shakerism in Kentucky came to an end and South Union was closed, the remaining members were given a choice: a lifetime home at Mt. Lebanon, New York or a gift of \$10,000. Ironically, Lizzie Simmons and William Bates defied one of the most solid Shaker principles and proceeded to get married. They lived in nearby Auburn in a house built out of materials from the dismantled West Family Dwelling at South Union. The Shaker leadership agreed that the new couple should keep the Shaker automobile. The combined gifts of auto and \$20,000 provides Lizzie and William with a comfortable living until they died. Now they lie in the Auburn cemetery, side by side, separate but together.

*Article written by long-time friend and colleague, Roger Selvidge. A meticulous researcher, talented photographer and gifted artist, Roger's contributions were many and often. This article is published posthumously in memory of Roger and his unwavering dedication to South Union.*

### *Welcome New Members*

Dr. & Mrs. Carlish Barnes, Alvaton, KY

Ellen Streib, St. Louis, MO

Mrs. John Rockford, Nashville, TN

Kimberly Cash, Bowling Green, KY

Wayne & Dottie Metcalf, Gallatin, TN

Brenda V. Steenanka, Franklin, KY



## *Restoration News*

The Shaker Museum at South Union recently received a \$30,000 grant from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation for the restoration of the 1846 Ministry Shop. Begun in the summer of 1846 and completed nearly one year later, the structure served as work space and living quarters for South Union's lead ministry. Described as a "snug little brick building" in an 1852 letter from South Union trustee John R. Eades to Isaac Newton Youngs at New Lebanon, New York, the Ministry Shop is a wonderful example of southern Shaker architecture, altered after the village closed only by a brick addition to the rear of the building, the removal of one window, and the installation of two bathrooms.

Plans are to interpret the building back to the period between 1865 and 1890, when prominent South Union leaders, Elder Harvey Eades, Eldress Nancy Moore, and Eldress Betsy Smith lived and worked there. Over the years the museum has collected a number of artifacts once owned or used by these three members of the ministry that led South Union during the last half of the 19th century. Among the items that will return to the building once it is restored are Eades' desk and wardrobe, Eldress Betsy's oval box, and a number of personalized textiles once belonging to Eldress Nancy.

Restoration will begin in the spring with completion a possibility by mid-2001. Preliminary research is currently underway, aided by a comprehensive compilation of Shaker manuscript references to the building, completed by staff member Saddler Taylor in 1998. We are also fortunate to have an intern working on the project. Christian Goodwillie, a university student from Chicago who recently completed an internship at Hancock Shaker Village, is studying and analyzing the structural elements of the Ministry Shop.

Work also continues on the 1917 Store Building. If you haven't been to South Union for a while, plan a trip sometime soon and see the progress that is being made.



Initial phase of the restoration process at the 1917 Shaker Store



# The Shaker Museum at South Union

*invites you to visit our*

## Museum Shop



Need the perfect Christmas gift? Come to our shop, located in the cellar of the 1824 Centre House, and enjoy the wide variety of goods and wares that fill the shelves. We carry quality reproduction woodenware including painted & oil-rubbed oval boxes, handled carriers, and

seed boxes. For those with culinary interests, pick from a wide assortment of Shaker cookbooks and regional food products like fruit preserves, apple butter, spiced mustards and an extensive selection of herbs packaged by the Shakers of Sabbathday Lake, Maine.

Handmade items include tinware, pottery, hurricane globes, baskets, rugs, tea towels, hand-dipped candles, and hard candy for the sweet tooth, made right here in Kentucky. The shop also has a large children's section with favorites like pewter jacks, peg tops, and wooden trains. If you are unable to pay us a visit, contact our shop at 1-800-811-8379 and we will be glad to fill your order by phone.



## *Memorial Contributions*

Mrs. Edie Bingham, in memory of Hilda Melton Hines

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Sisk, in memory of Hilda Melton Hines

## *Thank You for Your Contributions*

Joe Gran Clark, Russellville, KY for general support

John Campbell, New Haven, KY for general support

Nancy Gaines & Paula Clark, Auburn, KY for interpreters costumes

## *New Directions*

As if South Union has not gone through enough change in 2000, there is more to come. The departure of long-time director Tommy Hines, coupled with exciting financial challenges, has produced an almost electric atmosphere at South Union. While I have enjoyed serving as interim director for the last half of the year, new possibilities have surfaced for my personal and professional development. The past four years have been both challenging and rewarding, and I will miss all of the wonderful people that have been a part of South Union in so many ways. While wearing many different hats at South Union, I have considered it nothing less than a privilege to have led thousands of eager, insightful children through the halls of the museum, represented the organization at seminars and lectures, and experienced the excitement of working with a dedicated group of volunteers.

South Union is now stepping headlong into the future and the 2001 season will be another year full of challenges and change. While the new director has yet to be named, I trust that all of you will consider this an exciting and promising transition and continue to support the museum with all of the energy that you have exhibited in the past. I want to personally thank all of you that have made working at South Union such a positive and fulfilling experience. Looking forward...

*Saddler Taylor*

The ***South Union Messenger*** is published by the Shaker Museum at South Union.

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Eyes bigger than your stomach?...



## A Shaker Breakfast

...featuring a menu from 1864 that promises  
to please and astonish.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Saturday, November 11, 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.  
The Dining Room of the 1824 Centre Family Dwelling  
For reservations call 270-542-4167 or 1-800-811-8379  
or email us at [shakmus@logantele.com](mailto:shakmus@logantele.com).





SHAKER MUSEUM AT SOUTH UNION

South Union, Kentucky 42283

Jonathan Jeffrey  
110 Riverwood  
Bowling Green, KY 42103

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## *Upcoming at the Shaker Museum - Special Events*

### **November 11 A Shaker Breakfast**

Experience a morning meal like no other, with an extensive menu taken from South Union's Civil War journals.

Reservations required. Fee: \$20 members, \$22 non-members

Time: 9:00 am & 11:00 am

### **December 1-2 Christmas at Shakertown**

One of Kentucky's finest antique and handmade craft shows. Friday evening preview party, featuring dessert buffet, requires reservations. Saturday open to the public with canned food item as admission.

Time: 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm Friday

9:00 am - 5:00 pm Saturday